

SOFTWARE HELP

Custom folder views in XP

Q I use Windows XP Service Pack 2. I'd like folders containing Word documents to default to the Details view and folders containing photos to default to the Thumbnails view.

As far as I can see Windows allows me only to specify Details or Thumbnails for all my folders. How can I change all picture folders – and only picture folders – to display Thumbnails?

David Walter

A Windows actually lets you have different settings for individual folders. You need to have selected the option to Remember each folder's view. To do this, choose Folder Options from the Control Panel. On the View tab, select Advanced Settings and place a tick in the box for Remember each folder's view. Once you've done this and you select a view type in a folder, you should see the same view next time. In other words, if you set a picture folder to show Thumbnails, and a documents folder to show Details, they should keep those settings.

However, by default Windows XP remembers only the settings for the last 400 folders you viewed. This may sound like a lot, but it isn't, especially as the list is divided into 200 local folders and 200 network folders. When you open a folder for which Windows lacks a current setting and select a view type, Windows forgets the setting for the folder at the bottom of the list.

If your Windows XP installation can't even remember the settings on folders you've used recently, your Registry may have a problem. First make sure you have the latest Service Pack installed, as this fixes one problem. If XP still can't remember folder settings, try editing the Registry. Please remember that changing the wrong Registry setting can cause problems that may require you to reinstall Windows. Vow to be extra careful, then choose Start, Run, and type Regedit.

Folder view settings and customisations are stored in these Registry keys: HKey_Current_User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\Shell and HKey_Current_User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\ShellNoRoam.

You need to create a new DWORD Value in both Registry keys. In both cases, call the DWORD Value 'BagMRU Size' and set the value data to the number of folders you want Windows to remember. For Windows to remember the settings for 5,000 local folders and 5,000 network folders, set both values to 5,000.

Follow these steps exactly. First select the Registry folder HKey_Current_User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\Shell. On the Edit menu, point to New and then click DWORD Value. Type:

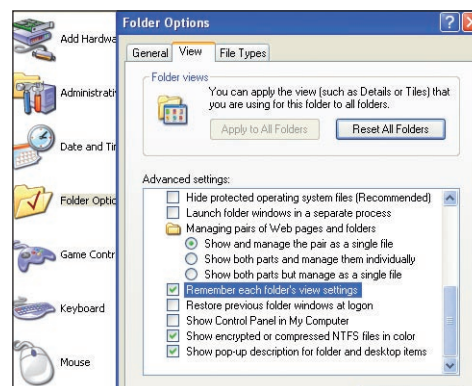
BagMRU Size

then press Enter. On the Edit menu, click Modify and type:

5000

then click OK. Follow the same steps for HKey_Current_User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\ShellNoRoam.

This method both fixes the Registry and increases the number of folders for which Windows XP remembers the settings. **KE**



▲ Set the folder options so that Windows remembers the view you select for each

Feedback Apostrophe-proof searches in Access

✉ In *Shopper* September 2007 you showed how to perform an Access search for names containing apostrophes, such as O'Shaughnessy. You explained that you need to replace the apostrophe with two single apostrophes for the search to work and provided a function.

There is an easier solution – and it's universal. When preparing the search string, instead of using:

```
Findtext = "[name] = '" &
DuplicateQuotes(name) &
"'"
```

(where DuplicateQuotes is your function), use:

```
Findtext = "[name] = ""'" &
name & ""'"
```

This avoids the need to create a function. You can search for problem strings such as "Paul's stuff" with no special processing.

David Harding

A David's method is indeed an alternative to the solution published in September's *Software Help* and does avoid using any string functions. I think it is harder to read, which is why I chose the method based on string functions. However, it's just as easy to incorporate into VBA code. Using David's method you'd create a Search button with a click handler along the lines of:

```
Private Sub Command3_Click()
Dim rs As Recordset
Set rs = Me.Recordset
ft = "[CompanyName]=""'" &
Me![combol] & ""'"
rs.FindFirst ft
End Sub
```

Just in case you're having trouble making out all those apostrophes, there are three double quote marks after [CompanyName]= and four double quote marks at the end of the line.

```
Option Compare Database

Private Sub Command2_Click()
Dim rs As Recordset
Set rs = Me.Recordset
posquote = InStr(1, Me![combol], "'")
If posquote > 0 Then
ft = "[CompanyName] = '"
ft = ft & Left(Me![combol], posquote) & ""'"
ft = ft & Right(Me![combol], Len(Me![combol]) - posquote) & ""'"
Else
ft = "[CompanyName] = '" & Me![combol] & ""'"
End If
rs.FindFirst ft
End Sub

Private Sub Command3_Click()
Dim rs As Recordset
Set rs = Me.Recordset
ft = "[CompanyName]=""'" & Me![combol] & ""'"
rs.FindFirst ft
End Sub
```

▲ Use three double quotes to include single quotes within text strings

YOUR EXPERTS

Contact Software Help for software advice and answers

Kay Ewbank

Database developer and productivity expert Kay Ewbank offers help with office applications.



Ben Pitt

Professional musician and keen photographer Ben Pitt gives advice on using creative software.



softwarehelp@computershopper.co.uk

Sound recording gives me a headache

Q I am doing the sound recording at our church – not because I know anything about it, but more along the lines of a one-eyed man being king in the land of the blind. We are using a PC running LP Recorder software to do the recording, and Audacity to tweak the results and make MP3s. These packages together seem to do the job, although neither is quite doing what we want 100 per cent.

LP Recorder has an Auto Level function that reduces the level if there are some loud bits, but does not increase the level when there are softer bits. As a consequence, there are patches of really soft sounds that I need to isolate and amplify manually afterwards. In general, the singing bits are loud and the talking bits are soft, but even during the talking bits, if the levels are OK and then the speaker coughs, that's enough to make Auto Level reduce the level again. Normalising the recording within Audacity does a fine job of getting chunks of the Wav into shape, but it won't do the entire recording in one go.

Is there any software that is designed for this sort of job?

Pete Revell

A You've correctly identified the biggest hurdle associated with recording a mixture of music and spoken word and, in fact, you have pretty much discovered the solution, too.

Dynamic range is the difference between the loudest and quietest sounds in a recording. Situations such as yours have a wide dynamic range, which is fine for the congregation in attendance but less helpful for the recording. Because people tend to listen to recorded music at relatively mild volumes, you need the volume of your recording to be fairly constant (a small dynamic range) so that the quieter sections don't get lost.

Standard practice when recording is to set the level so that the loudest sounds peak between -12 to -6dB below full scale, and leave it there for the entire recording. The level is set

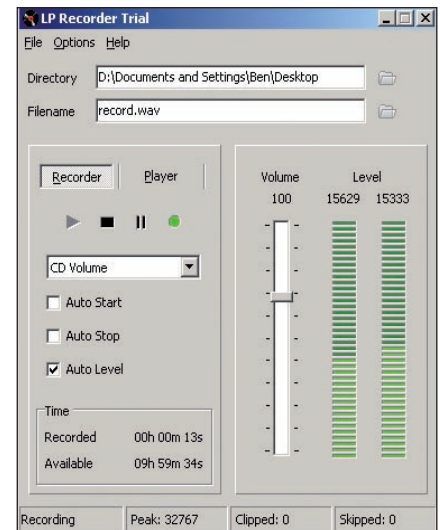
before recording starts, usually by asking the performer to make the loudest sound they're likely to make during their performance and adjusting the volume accordingly. It's quite normal for most of the recording to be very quiet, and this only becomes a problem when you come to turn up the quieter sections later and find them to be unacceptably noisy. This mostly depends on the quality of your equipment, so trial and error is the only way to ascertain whether noise is a problem. If it is, you'll either have to adjust the input level continuously by hand during recording, or upgrade your sound card.

It's probably impossible to ask the congregation to have a practice run while you set your recording level, which is why you've taken the sensible step of using LP Recorder's Auto Level function to avoid distortion. However, sections in which the volume is being lowered automatically can sound unnatural, so it's not ideal.

We would recommend abandoning LP Recorder and its Auto Level function and using Audacity to make your recording. Audacity has better input metering (calibrated in dB), and it supports 24-bit recording – if your sound card also supports this, it can help reduce noise. You'll probably have to keep an eye on the level the first time you use Audacity to record, but the chances are you'll soon find an input level that works from one week to the next.

Once you've finished making your recording, you'll need to reduce the dynamic range. The most laborious but arguably the best way to do this in situations such as yours is to adjust each section manually, as you have been doing. However, if you haven't got the time or the patience to process each section, you can do this more quickly using a compression effect. This compresses the dynamic range, attenuating the loudest sections and enabling you to turn the whole thing up. It will affect the subjective sound of the recording, though, so you'll need to decide whether or not you like the effect it gives.

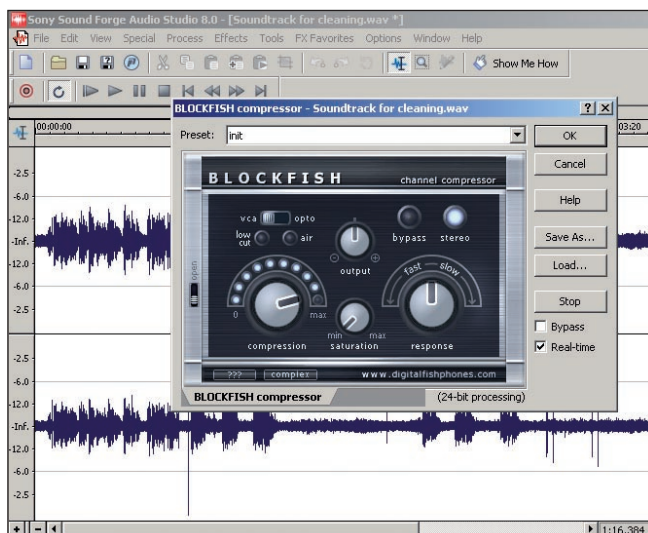
Audacity's built-in compressor is pretty hopeless, but the software supports third-party



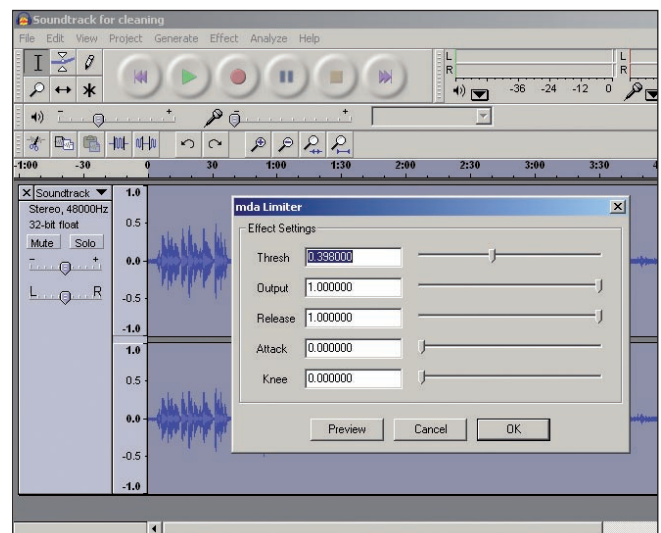
▲ LP Recorder includes an Auto Level option that reduces the recording level to avoid distortion

VST plug-ins (with the optional VST Enabler available from the Audacity download page). However, it doesn't display plug-in's graphical interface, instead presenting the user with a list of (often confusing) sliders. This problem is compounded by the fact that compressors can be tricky to set up – see *Software Help, Shopper* November 2006 for information on doing so. If you want to give it a go, try the MDA limiter VST plug-in from <http://mda.smartelectronix.com>. Leave the Output and Release sliders at maximum and the Attack and Knee at minimum, and try different Threshold values to see what works best for your recording.

If you want to invest in some more capable software, we recommend Sony Sound Forge Audio Studio 8 (£31 from dabs.com). Its interface is friendlier than Audacity's and its compression effect (called Dynamics) is much more effective, although it isn't particularly easy to use. Sound Forge Audio Studio provides full support for VST plug-ins, though, so use it in conjunction with the Blockfish plug-in from the Fish Fillets range at www.digitalfishphones.com. BP



▲ The Blockfish VST plug-in is an easy-to-use compressor that works well with Sony Sound Forge Audio Studio



▲ Audacity's compressor effect is fairly ineffective, but the program provides basic support for third-party VST plug-ins

Watermarks in PowerPoint

Q We use PowerPoint presentations a lot, and I'd like to be able to include our company logo as a backdrop to the slides. Is this possible?

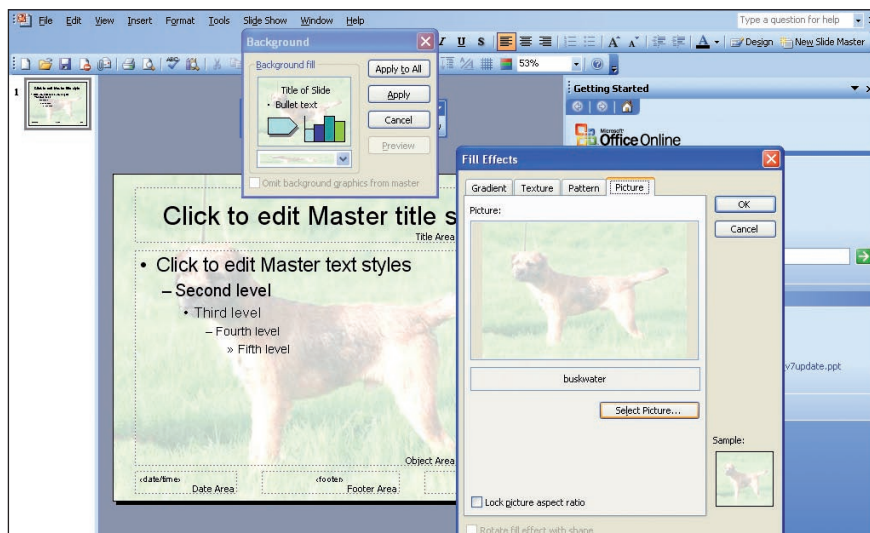
Louise Anderson

A You need to format the image as a watermark, which is essentially a picture placed in the background and formatted so that it is visible but doesn't overwhelm the foreground of the slide.

Assuming that you want the watermark on all your slides, you need to select the Slide Master by choosing Master from the View menu, then Slide Master. Next, choose the file that contains your logo. To do this, choose Picture from the Insert menu, then choose From File, and find the file containing the logo. Your logo will appear on the slide master.

The next step is to make it transparent. Select the logo, right-click, and from the menu that appears choose Format Picture. Finally, make sure the Picture tab is showing, and click the drop-down arrow next to the Color box. The option you need is Washout in PowerPoint 2003 or Watermark in PowerPoint 2000.

Now that you've created a partially transparent version of the image, you need to save it so that you can use it in the



▲ Insert a picture in the Background to have a watermark effect in PowerPoint

background. From the right-click menu, choose Save as picture, and save the image under a new name. Now you can delete the image from the slide, as you want to insert it as the background.

Next, from the Format menu, choose Background. In the dialog box that appears, click on the drop-down arrow next to the box at the

bottom-left of the dialog. Choose Fill Effects from the options shown, and from the Picture tab choose Select Picture.

Now insert the semi-transparent picture you've just saved. You'll see the logo appear as a background on the master slide, and it will then appear on the background of all the slides. **KE**

Video file fix

Q I have a Humax PVR9200T recorder, and I'm very pleased with it. However, while I can download recorded programmes from it to my PC, they are in .ts format. I have found players for these files, but nothing that converts them into a form acceptable to Adobe Premiere Elements 3. I have tried JetAudio7 but the audio is out of sync and the video quality is poor, despite my attempts to tweak it.

John Washbrook

A The .ts format is a type of MPEG2 file. In this instance, simply changing the file extension from .ts to .mpg makes it compatible with Premiere Elements 3, Windows Media Player and most other video software. If you can't see file extensions in Windows, click the Tools menu, Folder Options, View and untick Hide extensions for known file types.

This is a pretty rare case, because it's not often that tampering with file extensions does anything useful. **BP**

Toolbar trouble

Q I have Office 2002 running under Windows XP Professional, and have installed the Avery Label Wizard. My screen is set to 1,600x1,200.

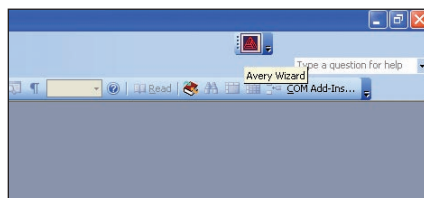
My standard Excel setup has one and a half toolbars. Annoyingly, the Avery single-button toolbar always forms a third toolbar line all by itself, despite the fact that there is plenty space for it on the second toolbar line. This reduces the spreadsheet area for no good reason.

I can move the Avery button up to the empty space on the second toolbar line, but it doesn't stay there. When I quit and relaunch Excel, the Avery button is back on the third toolbar line again, all by itself. How can I ensure that the Avery toolbar stays in the empty space on the second toolbar line?

Dr Richard Grant

A As far as I can tell (and in common with most add-ins), the Avery toolbar decides for itself where to sit, and that is on the first blank line following other toolbars. That's just the way the macro creators wrote it, and there's no way to change it, so you're condemned to move it every time.

If any readers have discovered a way to make it behave itself, please let us know. **KE**



▲ The Avery Label Wizard has a mind of its own on where its toolbar should be

Feedback Excel VLOOKUP fixed

Q In *Shopper* September 2007 a reader was having problems because he was trying to find entries in a table using VLOOKUP, but hadn't sorted the data first. As you pointed out, VLOOKUP returns the wrong row if the column you tell it to search isn't sorted.

Alternatively, he could try setting VLOOKUP's fourth parameter to FALSE, like so:

`=VLOOKUP(E5,$A$4:$C$11,2,FALSE)`

The FALSE command instructs VLOOKUP to keep going until it finds an exact match.

This makes sorting your data unnecessary

David Webster

A Thanks also to Hugo Minney and Mike Hughes for suggesting this alternative solution.

▲ use the FALSE setting on VLOOKUP to ensure that it searches the entire list even when not sorted into order

Access import errors

Q In the past I've imported our firm's phone list into Access from Excel without any problems, but now I'm getting the message "Subscript out of range". I have changed nothing at all in the set up and nothing in this Excel sheet is any different from the last. What is going on?

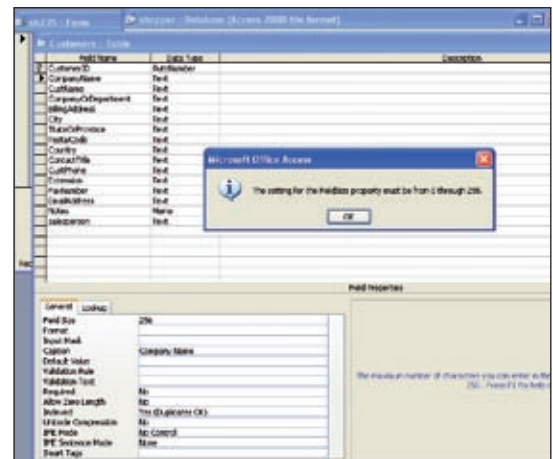
James Howley

A It's difficult to say exactly what the problem is, but here are a few things worth trying. First, select just the data you want to import from Excel, copy it to the clipboard and paste it into a new workbook. If you can import this new worksheet, the problem is probably a cell in the original worksheet that's outside the data range.

If you still get the error message, you can use what's called a 'binary search' to find the

offending cell. Split the data in two, take the second half and try importing it. If that causes the error, split that data in two and take the second half again; if it imports without problem, try the first half. Split the offending data block into two each time, and you'll pinpoint the problem record quite quickly. You can then try blanking each entry in the row one at a time until you find which cell is causing the problem.

Start testing with the second half of the data whenever you do a split because as you've imported the data successfully in the past, the chances are that the error is in a row later in the phone book. Of course, this doesn't hold true if your data is in alphabetical order.



▲ Access expects text strings to hold fewer than 255 characters

Cells containing more than 255 characters can cause errors, as Access expects text fields to be 255 characters or fewer. If a user has entered a # symbol, that might also cause an error. **KE**

I need Excel formulae that change every month

Q Each month I am required to send data for the previous month's production to my line manager. I have created a spreadsheet for each department into which my staff enter data. I have another spreadsheet that extracts the data from the various departmental spreadsheets and presents it in a single summary sheet. For example, in the departmental spreadsheets, people enter January's data into column A, February's in column B and so on. My summary sheet for January shows department 1's January data in column A, department 2's January data in column B and so on.

This is easy enough but I want to automate it. I want to be able to say which month I want to extract and let the software do the rest.

I have tried to use the INDIRECT function for this but it doesn't work the way I want.

Phil Thompson

A You want a formula that will return data from different columns depending on the value of a cell you enter the month into.

There are several ways of achieving this. Probably the simplest option is to use the

OFFSET function. This returns the value of a cell that's a specified number of rows and columns away from a 'base' cell. The function has three parameters – the cell reference for the base cell, the number of rows to offset and the number of columns to offset. So to specify the value in cell C6, you could use

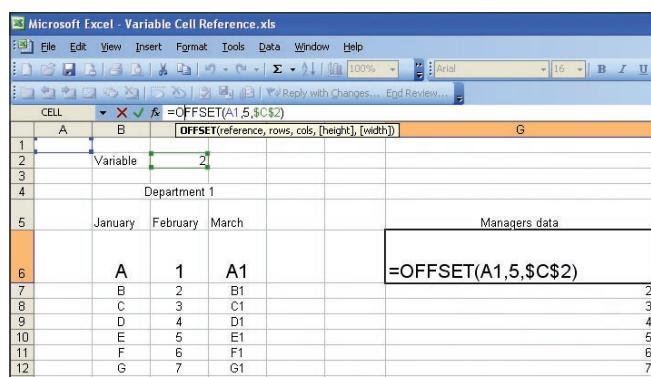
=OFFSET(A1,5,2)

In other words, look in the cell five rows down and two columns across from cell A1, which gets you to C6.

You want to type into cell C2 the number of the month to be returned, so changing the formula to:

=OFFSET(A1,5,SC\$2)

will get you the value in cell C6 if cell C2 contains the digit 2 (February). So far, this doesn't sound as though it's saving much work. However, you can copy this formula into all the cells of the column into which you want to import the correct month's data. If you then want to extract a different month's data, you simply change the digit in cell C2 to be the month number you want, and the formula will pick out the data for that month instead. **KE**



▲ Use OFFSET to find a value in a cell relative to the current cell

Keeping a running count of customers

Q I present a list of all my customer orders as an Access report. Every line of the report includes the relevant customer account number. I'd like my report to include a count of the number of different customer accounts shown. This mustn't include duplicates. I've tried Count and DCount in various ways but I'm stuck.

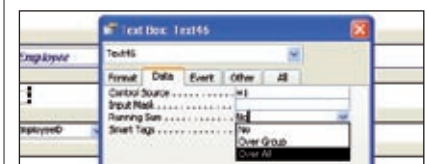
David Johnston

A The best way to tidy up your report and calculate your total is to use Access's Sorting and Grouping features, along with its RunningSum property.

First, group your report by customer account number with the Sorting and Grouping option in the View menu. Choose to group the report on the customer account number field, and select Yes for the group header. Next, move the customer account number text box into the group header area of the report.

Now add a text box for your counter to the group header section, and call it CustCount. You need to set its Control Source to equal 1 and its Running Sum property to Over All. Finally, in the report footer, add a text box with a control source of =CustCount.

As the report is generated, each time a new customer header is drawn the CustCount box will display a number one greater than the last header. When you get to the footer it will give you the number of unique customers. **KE**



▲ Set the Running Sum property to Over All to count the number of groups